

August 19th, 1989
13th newsletter

We left Pago Pago, American Samoa, Saturday, June 17th at 9:00 a.m. We had a great passage! We covered 1,442 miles in only 10½ days. Most days were sunny, not too hot. We had little or no chop, the wind was either on the quarter or broad on the beam- no beating into it at all. We were able to leave two hatches and some portholes open so we had plenty of fresh air down below. We were all happy, our spirits were high and the time went by quickly. This was what sailing is supposed to be like!

The morning we left Pago we were going through the reef at the end of the island when a squall came up and we hooked a fish. After a fun fight Craig brought in a 6' striped marlin. We never expected to catch one in the South Seas; Cabo maybe, but not here. After we took a few pictures, Craig unhooked the lure and let it go. We already had a freezer full of food and besides he was too pretty to eat. About the 6th day out we caught our first wahoo. It was 5' long and weighed approximately 25 pounds. He was good for 3 days of dinners and lunches.

On Monday, June 26th, we realized that we wouldn't make it before nightfall Tuesday, which meant hovering to most of the night. So we dug out the cruising spinnaker which was buried with other cruising debris underneath the quarterbunk. It did a marvelous job. We were on a close reach and were through the pass and anchored by 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

That passage was just about perfect. The girls didn't need seasick pills very much, we got some schooling in, all of us were rested and we made some great meals. Even though we had plenty to do, we got to the point where we were even a bit bored.

Coming through the pass was a 3 ring circus. Craig was up on the spreaders taking videos, Bill was bringing in a 20 pound trevally fish, the girls were on the bow spirit screaming and yelling excitedly at the accompanying dolphins, then at the huge manta rays. I was at the helm, watching the depth sounder go to 9'-11' while screaming at Craig for where was the infernal pass. The narrow but deep 1¼ mile pass had been dynamited out of the coral surrounding Palmyra during W.W. II, which then made it possible for boats to come in. We finally found it, made it in without hitting any coral heads, thus making ourselves ineligible for membership in the "Rangebusters" club.

Palmyra is an atoll formed from many islets or islands surrounding a lagoon 11 miles long by 3 miles wide. During W.W. II, Palmyra was used as a military base for the U.S. They built

an airstrip, roads, a hospital, barracks etc. They left all the buildings intact and a lot of equipment. Palmyra is currently owned by an American and is up for sale for only \$33 million. Anyone want to go in on it?

Palmyra reminds us the most closely of Suvarov. We all fell in love with it. White beaches fringe the sea side of the islands. The lagoon is teeming with sealife. Crabs, birds and hermit crabs abound onshore. It is the quintessential South Sea deserted island.

We shared the anchorage with 4 other boats- they were from Belgium, Australia, Canada and there was another yankee like ourselves. Over the years yatchies have taken supplies and left overs from the war to make comfortable facilities for other cruisers. Our social activities centered around the "Palmyra Yacht Club"- one of the abandoned buildings overlooking the lagoon. It was decorated with tables and chairs found around the island. Cruisers have painted the walls and beams with their names. There is a book and magazine trading center. Attached is a workroom for working on your boat. On the side of the building is the laundry center- 2 deep sinks with plenty of water out of a rainwater cistern. Up a path is an outdoor shower and bathtub- yes bathtub. The water was cold but refreshing. For a hot bath all you had to do was build a fire under the iron tub. Privacy was gained by using the rope at the head of the path- when it's closed it's in use; open, ready for use. Another path takes you to a sand beach where a volleyball net is set up. We played most every afternoon before dinner.

The sole permanent resident is a dog named Army. He's very friendly. He's getting old- his other two brothers, Navy and Palmyra, have already passed away. Everyone feeds him and takes care of him. His favorite things to do are shark hunting and riding big manta rays. When they come close to the concrete wharf he jumps off and rides on their backs as long as possible.

The two weeks we were there flew by. There was plenty to do. We took walks along the beaches and explored a lot of the old buildings and other war remnants. The girls painted the shells of the hermit crabs and had hermit crab races. Bill gave Kristen sailing lessons in the sailing dingy and got her well started. We also did a lot of visiting with the other cruisers.

One afternoon 12 of us went snorkling on the outside reef. We saw lots of live coral, colored fish and a sea turtle swimming underwater. One of the gals saw a shark near us but we didn't. We always kept the girls right next to us just in case.

Another afternoon we went with another boat to the other side of the lagoon to explore the old Army Hospital. It was a concrete Quonset hut type construction built to last for a couple of centuries. We took flashlights as it was all dark and eerie inside. We imagined what it might have been like when it was in use.

On the way we stopped at the bird sanctuary. There were a lot of babies hopping and screeching about. The atoll is full of

fairy terns, frigates, different varieties of boobies- all kinds of birds.

We got a lot of our food from the sea and land. Craig went fishing several times with the other guys outside the atoll and caught wahoo, giant trevally, yellow fin tuna and rainbow runner. One night he went walking on the barrier reef with two other guys. They caught 6 large lobster and 1 slipper lobster. Craig captured his first coconut crab, a big orange delicious monster. Another afternoon he went out with the guys to get land crab claws. They capture the crab, hold it down, then pump the biggest claw back and forth until the crab releases the whole arm with a "pop". The crab then has his other claw to forage with. When he molts the claw grows back again. Talk about a replenishable food source!

We had a total of 5 potlucks on shore with everyone. The food was superior. Craig smoked some of the fish one night. We had a Mongolian Hotpot another night with fish, 5 sauces and grilled lobsters. We had such island delicacies like heart of palm salad, lobster cerviche and octopus. Other nights there were things like lamb, homemade rolls, pizzas and desserts. This was not the place to lose weight.

Palmyra has such an unblemished feeling, especially good considering how close it is to Hawaii. It's a place we all definitely want to go to again.

We left Palmyra for Kauai, Hawaii, July 11th. Although the boat made good time, the passage felt like it crept by. There were a lot of reasons for this. One reason was that the boat was so uncomfortable. We were going to weather- upwind- the whole time. We never saw the Inter-Tropic Convergence Zone (commonly called the dulldrums) that we were supposed to go into. The wind stayed between 20-30 knots on the nose. The waves constantly banged into the boat which made it impossible to open any hatches or portholes. So, except for when the fans were going, we only had hot, dead air down below. Sleeping wasn't easy with the jerky, unset pattern of the motion of the boat. Besides that, we were all anxious to get to our destination. Activities like reading, game playing and school didn't hold our attention for long. We were down to canned food. Our refrigeration broke in Palmyra so we were without any cold food or drinks. Craig was dying for a cold beer, Bill wanted a dry martini, I wanted ice and the girls wanted to go to a McDonalds and meet some other kids.

We were never in any danger, but we kept a close watchout for Hurricane Delilia and tropical storm Eric which were heading our way. Had we left Palmyra a day or two later we would have had to avert our course. The weather fax definitely earned it's keep. As it was, we beat into Nawilliwili Harbor in Kauai just in time- Delilia passed 60 miles south of Kauai the next day and Eric passed right over us.

It was the first time we ever made a night entrance into an unknown harbor on this trip but no one wanted to stay out another minute. When we got behind the protective breakwater and anchored, everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The silence was

deafening. That passage took only 7 3/4 days, it just seemed longer. We got in July 19th.

Checking into U.S. Customs was easy. Craig called the official's home and left a message with his granddaughter to come check us in. He came aboard, chatted awhile, then said we seemed like nice people so he wasn't going to search the boat. Agriculture only took a phone call and that was it. We were now free to join the modern world. We rented a car, ate an early dinner at, where else? McDonalds, filled a grocery cart full of goodies and ice and all slept like the dead that night.

Nawiliwili Marina is a small marina, holding only 50 boats. Luckily, there were 3 other children for the girls to play with. It was nice to have a dock to step on, electricity and all the fresh water we wanted. The only drawback was the rain. It poured for 4 straight days. In fact, the first three weeks were pretty wet. Locals said it hasn't rained like this for 20 years (we've heard this before!)

We spent 10 days in Nawiliwili getting the boat shipshape. Bill Cooley got to stay for 5 days, then he flew home. We saw our friends Susie and Steve Itrich who were staying at Poipu Beach on vacation. They let us have our first in-install hot shower that we'd had since May. It was heavenly.

Our close friends, Kurt, Jan, Kurtis, and Erin Van Horn, came August 7th to Kauai for 10 full days. They stayed at the Hanelei Bay Resort on the hill above Hanelei bay where we anchored the boat, on the north side of the island. The day they came the rain stopped. We only had a few intermittent showers while they were here. We had so much fun- the time sped by. Kurt wanted to do things- so we did. We took a day and sailed up the beautiful Na Pali coast, anchoring part of the time to go under a cascading waterfall ashore and play in the surf. A few days we went to sunny Poipu Beach, Craig and Kurt went golfing two days on PGA golf courses (and came back tired!), Kurtis learned to sail in the dingy and we went snorkling on several different beaches on the island. The adults took an hour helicopter ride which explored the wilderness areas of the island. We did some sightseeing, tried fishing and to relax we sat by the pool while the kids played. We sure loved getting to explore Kauai with them and seeing them!

The girls and I fly home August 22nd and will stay with Gloria Cooley until Craig gets home. Bill Cooley and his friend Gus Andre from the East Coast and our friend Glen Johnson from New Zealand are all going to accompany Craig on the return passage. It should take them 18-25 days to get to Long Beach. Then that's it. It's hard to believe it's coming to a close. We've had 588 wonderful days and are sad to see them end. I guess we'll just have to plan another trip down the line!

Kristen Lauren

Lady

Craig

Virginia

Hamilton